

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 TRSE-00 OMB-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00
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FM AMEMBASSY ROME
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9812
INFO AMCONSUL FLORENCE
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMCONSUL GENOA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMCONSUL MILAN
AMCONSUL NAPLES
AMCONSUL PALERMO
AMEMBASSY PARIS
POUCH/AMCONSUL TRIESTE
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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, IT
SUBJECT: DC DIRECTORATE ADOPTS COUTIOUS CRISIS STRATEGY

SUMMARY: MEETING LATE INTO THE NIGHT OF JANUARY 11, THE
CHRISTIAN DEMOCRAT (DC) PARTY DIRECTORATE VOTED UNANIMOUSLY
TO ACCEPT PARTY SECRETARY ZACCAGNINI'S STATEMENT AS
THE BASIS TO BEHIN NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE OTHER PARTIES
TO RESOLVE THE IMPENDING GOVERNMENT CRISIS. ZACCGNINI
RULED OUT A POLITICAL ALLIANCE WITH THE COMMUNISTS
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(EMERGENCY GOVERNMENT) BUT CALLED ON THE OTHER PARTIES
TO AVOID THE "TRAUMA" OF EARLY ELECTIONS BY REACHING A
"LARGE AND FRUITFUL CONSENSUS IN PARLIAMENT" THROUGH
A REINVIGORATION AND UPDATING OF LAST JULY'S PROGRAM
ACCORD. THE DC'S DELIBERATELY VAGUE FORMULATION
DISAPPOINTED THE PCI AND LEFT PARTIES WHICH MAY HAVE
EXPECTED AN EXPLICIT INVITATION TO RESOLVE THE CRISIS

BY ACCEPTING THE PCI IN THE PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY. THE STIFFENED POSITION TAKEN BY THE DIRECTORATE UNDOUBTEDLY REFLECTS STRONG PRESSURE FROM WITHIN THE PARTY AGAINST SUCH A STEP. HOWEVER, THE DC'S OFFER TO SEEK A "PARLIAMENTARY CONSENSUS" (INTERPRETED BY SOME AS MEANING PCI PARTICIPATION IN "A PROGRAM MAJORITY") ALLOWS FOR A FAIR MEASURE OF NEGOTIATING FLEXIBILITY, EVEN INCLUDING PCI ENTRY IN TO THE PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY. MEANWHILE, WE HAVE BEEN TOLD BY A SENIOR MINISTER THAT ANDREOTTI IS EXPECTED TO SUBMIT HIS RESIGNATION TO PRESIDENT LEONE ON JAN. 16 AFTER CONSULTING THE PARLIAMENTARY GROUP HEADS OF THE SIX PARTIES. END SUMMARY.

1. THE DC DIRECTORATE MET ON JANUARY 11 TO ADOPT A STRATEGY IN RESPONSE TO THE DEMANDS OF THE PCI AND LEFT PARTIES FOR FULL PARTICIPATION IN AN EMERGENCY GOVERNMENT. PRIOR TO THE MEETING, DC LEADERS HAD EMPHATICALLY REJECTED ANY FORMAL ALLIANCE WITH THE COMMUNISTS, EVEN ON AN EMERGENCY BASIS. THE DC DIRECTORATE CONFIRMED THIS REFUSAL. DC LEADERS HAD, HOWEVER, EARLIER INFORMALLY EXPLORED THE POSSIBILITY OF MEETING THE PCI'S DEMANDS FOR ANOTHER "FORWARD STEP" BY INVITING THE COMMUNISTS INTO THE PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY. MANY EXPECTED THE DIRECTORATE TO RESULT IN SUCH AN EXPLICIT INVITATION. CONFRONTED BY STRONG RESISTANCE WITHIN THE PARTY AGAINST FURTHER LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ACCOMMODATION OF THE PCI, THE DC ADOPTED A DELIBERATELY VAGUE RESPONSE.

2. IN ZACCAGNINI'S STATEMENT (WHICH WAS UNANIMOUSLY ADOPTED AS THE BASIS FOR THE PARTY'S NEGOTIATIONS) HE INVITES THE OTHER PARTIES TO REINVIGORATE AND UPDATE LAST JULY'S PROGRAM ACCORD IN ORDER TO REACH A "LARGE AND FRUITFUL CONSENSUS IN PARLIAMENT" BETWEEN THE SIX PARTIES. ZACCAGNINI SAID THAT THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE PUBLIC ORDER AND ECONOMIC SITUATION CALLED FOR A MORE TIGHTLY COORDINATED EMERGENCY PROGRAM, AND THAT THIS "MUST PRECEDE ANY DISCUSSION OF POSSIBLE (POLITICAL) FORMULAE." WHILE HE SAW NO NEED TO CHANGE THE EXISTING GOVERNMENT FORMULA (AND HE PRAISED THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE ANDREOTTI GOVERNMENT), HIS REFERENCE TO THE NEED FOR A BROAD "PARLIAMENTARY CONSENSUS" IMPLIED WILLINGNESS TO MEET LEFT PARTIES' DEMANDS FOR SOME CHANGE. HE CALLED ON ALL THE PARTIES TO DEMONSTRATE THEIR RESPONSIBILITY BY FINDING A SOLUTION WHICH AVOIDS THE "TRAUMA" OF EARLY PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS IN AN ENVIRONMENT OF DETERIORATING PUBLIC ORDER.

3. ADDRESSING THE PCI, ZACCAGNINI SAID THAT "I FULLY UNDERSTAND THE DIFFICULTIES THAT HAVE EMERGED ESPECIALLY WITHIN THE COMMUNIST PARTY, AS THE RESULT OF CERTAIN DISSATISFACTIONS IN ITS BASE AND OF SOME DISINTEGRATING PRESSURES, BUT ONE CANNOT UNDERSTAND HOW THESE OBJECTIVE DIFFICULTIES CAN BE OVERSOME BY A SIMPLE CHANGE IN FORMULAE OR THE POLITICAL FRAMEWORK." HE REITERATED THE DC'S INABILITY TO ENTER INTO A "DENATURING" ALLIANCE WITH THE PCI AND SPOKE OF THE "PERMANENT" DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE TWO PARTIES.

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4. IT IS CLEAR THAT THE OUTSPOKEN RESISTANCE OF MANY DC PARLIAMENTARIANS (ROME 236) AGAINST FURTHER CONCESSIONS TO THE PCI (AND, SPECIFICALLY, PCI ENTRY IN THE PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY) INFLUENCED THE DIRECTORATE'S RESPONSE. WHILE THE LEADERSHIP UNDOUBTEDLY REGARDS SOME MEASURE OF INTERNAL

RESISTANCE TACTICALLY USEFUL, ZACCAGNINI AND MORO WERE OBVIOUSLY IRRITATED BY THE VEHEMENCE OF THE CRITICISM. IN THEIR VIEW, THE "INADMISSABLE BEHAVIOR" OF THOSE WHO HAD CRITICIZED THE SECRETARIAT HAD LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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DAMAGED THE PARTY, CREATING "NEGATIVE REPERCUSSIONS, UNCERTAINTIES, AND APPREHENSIONS IN THE ELECTORATE AND PUBLIC OPINION. " STATING THAT "THE UNITY OF OUR PARTY IS INDISPENSABLE FOR OUR CREDIBILITY," ZACCAGNINI TRIED TO ASSURE THE PARTY THAT "WE WILL NOT ALLOW ANYONE TO FORCE OUR HAND TO TAKE DECISIONS WHICH DO NOT CORRESPOND TO THE INTERESTS OF THE COUNTRY."

5. AS MIGHT BE EXPECTED, L'UNITA RATHER GLUMLY DESCRIBED ZACCAGNINI'S SPEECH AS BACKWARD, CONTRADICTIONARY, AND DISAPPOINTING. THE PCI DAILY COMPLAINED THAT ZACCAGNINI HAD DESCRIBED AN EMERGENCY SITUATION, ONE OBVIOUSLY REQUIRING AN EMERGENCY GOVERNMENT, BUT HAD NONETHELESS MAINTAINED THAT THE DC STILL HAD THE RIGHT TO GOVERN ALONE. THE PAPER WARNED THAT THE CNTRY HAD NO TIME FOR THE DC'S "TACTICAL BALLET" OF STALLING. INCONCLUSIVE AND PATCHED-UP SOLUTIONS, IT SAID, WOULD ONLY FUEL THE CLIMATE OF VIOLENCE AND GIVE THE DC A BREATHING SPACE TO PREPARE FOR EARLY ELECTIONS OR A "CONFUSING" CONFRONTATION OVER THE SPRING REFERENDA (SEE ROME 0080) IN ORDER TO SHIP UP A "CONSERVATIVE AND AUTHORITARIAN BACKLASH" IN THE COUNTRY. THE PCI DIRECTORATE IS MEETING ON JANUARY 12 TO EVALUATE THE DC'S RESPONSE.

6. MEANWHILE, IN ACCORDANCE WITH A PLAN ANNOUNCED IN PARLIAMENT ON JANUARY 10, PRIME MINISTER ANDREOTTI IS EXPECTED TO CONSULT THE PARLIAMENTARY GROUP HEADS OF THE SIX PARTIES WITHIN THE NEXT FEW DAYS ON ATTITUDES TOWARD HIS GOVERNMENT (ROME 514). HE WILL THEN INFORM PRESIDENT LEONE THAT THE PCI, PSI, PRI, AND PSDI HAVE WITHDRAWN THEIR ABSTENTION SUPPORT AND, ACCORDING TO A SENIOR MINISTER, WILL SUBMIT HIS RESIGNATION ON JAN. 16. LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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7. COMMENT: THE STRONG RESISTANCE FROM SIZEABLE GROUPS WITHIN THE DC AGAINST THE LEADERSHIP'S INFORMAL PROPOSAL TO RESOLVE THE CRISIS BY ACCEPTING THE PCI IN THE PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY UNDOUBTEDLY STIFFENED

THE FIRECTORATE'S RESPONSE. AS A RESULT, A SHOW-DOWN WAS AVERTED AND THE PARTY'S ESSENTIAL UNITY WAS PRESERVED. THE DC'S STATEMENT, HOWEVER, HAS LEFT THE SITUATION AS TENSE AND CONFUSED AS BEFORE. IT IS DIFFICULT TO PREDICT WHAT THE REACTION OF THE PCI AND THE LEFT PARTIES MIGHT BE. MUCH WILL DEPEND ON THE INTERPRETATION THAT WILL BE GIVEN TO ZACCAGNINI'S OFFER TO ACHIEVE GREATER "POLITICAL SOLIDARITY" THROUGH A BROADER "PARLIAMENTARY CONSENSUS." IN CONVERSATIONS WITH THE PRESS, SOME SENIOR DC OFFICIALS HAVE EXPLAINED THAT THE PARTY IS WILLING TO ESTABLISH A "PROGRAM MAJORITY" WHICH INCLUDES THE PCI. HOWEVER, PARTICULARLY AFTER LAST FALL'S JOINT PARLIAMENTARY RESOLUTIONS ON FOREIGN PROVIDES A PROGRAM MAJORITY IN ALL BUT IN NAME. WILL NOT THE PCI DEMAND A MORE DEMONSTRABLE, FORWARD STEP? THE VERY VAGUENESS OF THE DC RESPONSE PROVIDES A FAIR MEASURE OF NEGOTIATING FLEXIBILITY. EVEN PARTICIPATION OF THE PCI IN THE PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY WOULD NOT BE NECESSARILY EXCLUDED BY ZACCAGNINI'S "PARLIAMENTARY CONSENSUS" FORMULA. ONE MODERATE REFORM PARLIAMENTARIAN WE TALKED TO EXPRESSED SKEPTICISM OVER THE LACK OF CLARITY ON THIS POINT, AND NOTED THAT SOME DC OFFICIALS HAVE ALREADY GONE AROUND TO THE OTHER PARTIES TO ASSURE THEM OF THE FLEXIBILITY IN THE DC'S POSITION.HOLMES

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